

GMPO Director's Report

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Project Highlight: A Public Exhibit at the Florida Aquarium on Invasive Species

May 23 – 25, 2002, the Florida Aquarium in Tampa held the grand opening of Invaders! Florida's Most Unwanted Species, a brand new interactive animal exhibit featuring invasive species in Florida – what they are, how they got here and what you can do about invasives already here. The Gulf of Mexico Program provided support for the 2,500 square foot exhibit which features colorful interactive fun and games for all ages and more than 20 different Florida invasive species such as: walking catfish, tokay gecko, green iguana, Cuban tree frog, Brazilian pepper, marine toad, house mouse, knight anole, suckermouth catfish and red-eared sliders. Invaders! Has activities for everyone from toddlers to adults. Most non-native species cause little harm and are good for us. However, out of place and out of control, invasive species take over and degrade habitats, introduce diseases, drive away or wipe out native species and threaten the biodiversity of Florida. Invaders also cost money. In 2000 alone, Florida spent over \$125 million to control invasive species. **(Contact: Larinda Tervelt, 228-688-1033)**

One Gulf Campaign Update

The One Gulf billboard and website campaign has truly been a partnership effort. Since January, members of the Communications Committee have diligently worked to update a 1995 publication entitled Gulf of Mexico Repair Kit, which contains a comprehensive list broken down by state and county of where people can go to dispose of household hazardous waste. The results of the effort are on a new web site found at: <http://www.onegulf.org>. This site was overseen by Tim Reid with the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Program and designed by John Grigsby of the University of Southern Mississippi. The website will be publicized on a series of 10-plus billboards along I-10 from Beaumont, Texas, through the Panhandle of Florida. Space for the billboards was donated by Lamar Advertising, and individual partners, such as USGS, Army Corps of Engineers, Texas Chemical Council, Texas Farm Bureau, Gulf of Mexico Foundation, and Mississippi Power Company, are contracting individually with Lamar to pay for the vinyl to erect the billboards. The website provides fun and interesting facts about the Gulf of Mexico and lets individuals know what they can do to help protect the Gulf of Mexico. **(Contact: Terry Hines Smith, 228-688-1159)**



Gulf Guardian Award Winners for 2002 Selected

The review and ranking committee for the Gulf Guardian Awards met in late April at Stennis Space Center. Their recommendations for Gulf Guardian Award winners for 2002 were endorsed by the Management Committee. Prospective winners were sent through U.S. EPA Regions 4 and 6 and through the state environmental agencies for a quick check to ensure no enforcement actions were pending. We are now in the process of notifying entrants of the results of the competition and of exploring options for where to conduct the awards ceremony. One option is the Clean Gulf 2002 Conference which will be

held in Galveston, Texas, Nov. 5-7. This particular conference has about 1,000 participants and rotates to a different Gulf States each year. This year there were a total of 55 entries from all five Gulf Coast states. They are listed in the table below and will soon be posted to the GMPO web site:

	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Business Category	BP America, Inc. Houston, TX	Outback Steakhouse Gulfport, MS	BASF Corporation Freeport, TX
Partnership Category	The Florida Aquarium Tampa, FL	Mobile Area Water and Sewer Service, Mobile, AL	MSU, Center for Sustainable Design, Starkville, MS
Individual Category	Dr. Sharon Walker Biloxi, MS	Eddie Seidensticker Webster, TX	Jayne Buttross Jackson, MS
Government Category	City of Baytown Baytown, TX	Greater Lafourche Port Commission, Galliano, LA	The Forever Wild Program Montgomery, AL
Youth/Education Category	Project CATE Foundation, Inc., Mobile, AL	Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, Bryan, TX	Chevron, Pascagoula Refinery, Pascagoula, MS
Nonprofit Org. Category	Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, Inc. Cortez, FL	The Nature Conservancy of the Florida Keys, Summerland Key, FL	Clearwater Marine Aquarium Clearwater, FL

(Contact: Terry Hines Smith, 228-688-1159)

Management Committee Follow-Up

At the GMP Management Committee (MC) meeting on May 8-9, 2002, the special Ad Hoc Workgroup on GMP Performance established at the October MC meeting to review the history of the GMP, its current strategic management structure and processes, and its Federal Advisory Committee Charter presented the following recommendations: GMP should (1) function at both regional and local watershed scales, (2) continue as FACA Committee; (3) continue the Policy Review Board with limited meetings; (4) continue MC in current capacity; (5) shift from standing team and committees to "project teams;" (6) continue the Citizens Advisory Committee; (7) explore an Executive Order for the GMP; (8) continue EPA as the Administrative Lead for the GMP; (9) utilize a strategic assessment process to accomplish basin-wide and place-based objectives. MC endorsed the recommendations as presented with the exceptions of (1) requesting further evaluation on transitioning the Focus Teams to Project Teams and feasibility of two standing committees (Habitat and Public Health.); (2) requesting a draft Executive Order be presented to the PRB at the July meeting, and (3) using the pilot strategic assessment process in Mobile Bay to evaluate the effectiveness of the process. The recommendations will be forwarded to the PRB for consideration, revision, and final adoption. Additional actions by the MC include: requesting revisions to the mercury subobjective and annual performance goals, charging the Public Health Focus Team to develop a Project Team on consumption advisories for mercury to develop recommendations for MC consideration, requesting GMPO to prepare a letter for the MC to withdraw as the Regional Panel for the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. *(Contact: Gloria Car, 228-688-2421)*

Mark Your Calendars.

- June 11, 2002: Communications Committee Meeting, Hilton Riverside, New Orleans, LA
- June 11, 2002: Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting, Hilton Riverside, New Orleans, LA
- June 12-13, 2002: Comprehensive Meeting of the Focus Teams, MMRC and DITC, Hilton Riverside, New Orleans, LA
- June 13, 2002: Citizens Advisory Committee Wrap-up Session, Hilton Riverside, New Orleans, LA
- June 19, 2002: Mississippi State Projects Ranking Meeting, Biloxi, MS
- June 26-27, 2002: Alabama State Pilot Strategic Assessment Meeting, Mobile, AL
- July 17-18, 2002: Policy Review Board Meeting, Embassy Suites, New Orleans, LA
- July 10, 2002: Louisiana State Projects Ranking Meeting, Pennington Center, Baton Rouge, LA

The Risk of Eating Raw Oysters: Advice for Persons with Liver Disease, Diabetes, or Weakened Immune Systems

Each year millions of Americans enjoy eating raw molluscan shellfish – especially oysters and clams. But if you have **liver disease, diabetes**, or a **weak immune system**, raw oysters or clams containing the bacteria *Vibrio vulnificus* can make you seriously ill. You can avoid illness simply by: 1) Eating only oysters or clams that have been thoroughly cooked; or 2) Eating raw oysters or clams only if they are treated and labeled “Processed to reduce *Vibrio vulnificus* to non-detectable levels.” If you would like to receive the pamphlet entitled “*The Risk of Eating Raw Oysters*” contact Terry Hines Smith at 228-688-1159 or via email at hines-smith.terry@epa.gov. The pamphlet defines *Vibrio vulnificus*, tells you where it is found, describes those people at risk, looks at how you can avoid infection, and details the symptoms of infection. **(Contact: Tom Herrington, 228-688-7941)**

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